



George Silver

AFSC unit members rebuild a flood-damaged house in a Mexican village.

## Two Decades in Mexico

### THE CASE OF THE ADOBE DOME

By MATT HERRON

NEAR THE CREST of a steep hill outside the village of Nanacamilpa stands a house radically different from the rectangular adobe structures of most villages in the state of Tlaxacala, Mexico. Shaped like a half-grapefruit face down on the hillside, it has attracted a stream of villagers since its completion in March. It looks like a mud igloo, but this curious crossbreed may generate a revolution in Mexican village architecture.

The chief promoter of the dome home is Jerry Lehmann, a recent Oberlin graduate doing his alternative service in Mexico with the AFSC. Jerry found after beginning his work in the village that many people couldn't afford homes of the usual machine-made bricks because wood for roof poles, and window and door frames is scarce and costly in Mexico. He discovered a plan for a domed structure that supported its own roof of mud brick, and designed a special mold to produce curved bricks and a jig to maintain the shape of the house during construction. His final plans called for a shell built entirely without wood and costing about two-thirds of the \$60 usually needed for a comparable structure.

Heluteris Cortes Cortes, a local workman with imagination, was willing to build the first demonstration house for his family. Standing next to it in mute testimony to the expense of the conventional dwelling is a small roofless hut which Heluteris began last year but couldn't finish due to the cost of the roof. With the encouragement of the governor of the state a second dome is now under construction on a demonstration plot in the city of Tlaxacala.

Jerry's other activities include work with a 4-H type club for local boys and an experimental plot of wheat and hybrid corn. Through the Heifer Project he obtained eight pairs of purebred pigs which he parceled out to local 4-H clubs. He persuaded the government to give the village 3400 assorted fruit trees, and encouraged a local carpenter to begin building wooden paddle washing machines of a new design.

#### 3000 Volunteers Serve

Jerry Lehmann's work in Nanacamilpa is the most recent entry in a ledger of Quaker service in Mexico that was begun more than 20 years ago. The initial entry reads: Summer,

1939; Santa Ana del Pilar, state of Coahuila; completed a school building for the village. Worked with villagers under Mexican direction.

Since that summer over 3000 college-age volunteers from more than 28 countries have drained swamps, constructed dams, laid fresh water pipelines, and built roads. In cooperation with Mexican public health and agricultural experts they have conducted vaccination campaigns and improved sanitation. The majority of volunteers have served in groups of 18-20 during summer months.

Gradually the program is expanding to other areas of Latin America. This year the first service unit will work in Guatemala and soon there may be projects in Peru and Venezuela. Last summer volunteers from Guatemala, El Salvador, Cuba, and Panama came to AFSC camps in Mexico.

#### Veteran Volunteer Views 20 Years of Service

*Forrest Comfort comments on the increasing interest in voluntary social service among Latin Americans.*

As I look back over 20 years of Friends Service Units in Latin America, especially in Mexico, two developments which impress me most are the growth of the Mexican Friends Service Committee and the earnest devotion of its followers to volunteer welfare services. State and national officials have shown similar interest in the development of voluntary service.

In the chaos which followed seven years of revolution, Mexican government departments began the almost insurmountable task of providing the most pressing needs of the people. Teachers, doctors, and nurses gave unstintingly of themselves but were inadequate in the face of the great needs.

Our early units stimulated cooperation on work projects in their own

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... to see what lies beyond ...

Philadelphia, Pa.  
May, 1960

Dear Friends:

These words are written at a time when disarmament has become the foremost issue in world politics. Today's newspaper gives five front-page columns of encouraging reports on the current negotiations. With two disarmament conferences proceeding simultaneously in Geneva and with the summit meetings looming, the opportunities are large for men to retreat from great folly and move toward a saner world.

Tomorrow's story may be less hopeful. We know the way to complete disarmament will be long and subject to many vicissitudes. Yet this is not the moment in history for men to live in numb frustration. It is a time to speak out, to give our leaders that positive support without which they cannot take the initiatives in peacemaking; without which they dare not show trust in others. A breakthrough now with a test ban agreement will pave the way for other moves. A clear expression of public opinion asking that war be outlawed is needed now as never before.

A letter to the President is a way of getting your personal convictions before our leaders. On the eve of the recent MacMillan-Eisenhower talks Harold Evans, our chairman, appealed to the President to work for an agreement at Geneva on a nuclear test ban.

Disarmament is a magnificent negative. It is important that we place side by side with disarmament the magnificent positive of the larger life which a disarmed world would offer. For centuries a vital element in the relationships of nation states has been the power of their arms. As arms disappear, new relationships must evolve, for we cannot disarm into a vacuum. Is it too much to dream that one day a nation's prestige—"la gloire," as the French have it—might be based on greatness through service rather than greatness through power?

Disarmament and the radically new relationships which must take the place of "the arbitrament of arms" are seen by many as threatening their traditional values or way of life. We need to help men to take the immensely difficult first steps to peace by encouraging them to see what lies beyond.

Here is another point at which mankind must break through to new views of what it can mean to live together in peace. The material prospects are, of course, immense. Even more exciting are the liberations of mind and spirit which would come about in a world genuinely at peace. Initiatives in the building of a peaceful order are no less necessary than in the elimination of arms. This dual task calls for a concentration of resources, leadership, and vision which no nation on earth has yet applied to the business of peacemaking.

Yours sincerely,

*Colin W. Bell*

Executive Secretary



## OUR MAIN CONCERN

was the title of this cartoon contributed by Walt Partymiller who is on the staff of the GAZETTE AND DAILY in York, Pa. He also offered other GAZETTE cartoons on peace and disarmament for use in AFSC publications.

## CREATIVE EN

BY GRACE PERKINSON

WITH THEIR RETURN from seven months in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, Douglas and Dorothy Steere recently concluded a series of travel assignments which took them—on behalf of the AFSC—around the world.

In 1950 agreement was made between the American Friends Service Committee and Haverford College enabling the Steeres to spend six months out of each two-year period traveling under the Committee's leadership interspersed with a foundation interested in religious affairs later contributed substantially toward the cost of the plan. Douglas Steere is Thomas Wistar Brown Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College.

Since 1950 Douglas and Dorothy Steere have made five trips abroad, visiting AFSC projects, getting the feel of history in segments of the world, reviving and renewing relationships with far-scattered friends of the Committee's varied work.

Highlighting their concluding trip, said Dorothy Steere, "was the opportunity for 'creative encounter.'" In Vienna, they went as AFSC observers to the Seventh World Festival of Youth. Other Quaker representatives, both American and British, were also among the 120 persons who attended



Phil Buskirk

Israeli boys are curious about Douglas Steere's camera during his visit to the Greek Orthodox Church in Nazareth, site of Mary's Well.

# VE ENCOUNTER MARKS STEERE TRAVELS

the affair with official observer status.

At Quakerhaus in Vienna, where American, British, and Austrian Friends have worked together since the 1920's, hospitality was extended to all who wished to come for conversation and informal gatherings. Other Quaker International Centers visited by the Steeres are in Paris, Geneva, Beirut, Delhi, and Tokyo.

Another place for imaginative exchange was the AFSC-sponsored Conference for Parliamentarians held in Switzerland. Douglas and Dorothy Steere were among the Quaker team which joined parliamentarians from 13 countries for a week of informal discussion.

## Leaders Exchange Views

COMMUNICATION with churchmen on the continent included eight days at the World Council of Churches' ecumenical study center near Geneva, where Douglas Steere was asked to give five lectures on Quakerism and to conduct a seminar for some 50 churchmen from all over the world.

Discussions with leading representatives of other world religions were central in the schedule.

In Israel the Steeres met, among outstanding Jewish spokesmen, the celebrated philosopher, Martin Buber. In speaking of the tension between Israeli and Arab, Buber said, "The situation must be created where we can once again talk to each other and not talk only out the window to spectators as we ignore each other."

During three weeks in Cairo they met principal men of Islam who carry responsibility for spiritual leadership in this capital of the Muslim world. Lengthy exchange of views and information helped to enlarge areas of common concern between them. Contemplating the idea of a small center in the Middle East where Christian and Muslim scholars might meet, one Arab spokesman alluded to the Western tendency to "organize." "Let the spirit and the experience," he said, "precede the organization." Talks with Hindu leaders in India and with Buddhists in Japan brought further insight to the challenging encounter with representatives of five of man's oldest religious traditions.



Phil Buskirk

Martin Buber, Hebrew philosopher, is one of the many religious leaders with whom the Steeres exchanged ideas during their world travels.

## African Problems Studied

REPEATED attention was given during these travels to the continent of Africa, which the Steeres visited for the first time in 1953 spending four months in South Africa, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, the Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Kenya.

During this trip, the Steeres explored possible projects that Friends might undertake in the field of race relations. Further study of Africa's problems and opportunities was made during later trips in 1955 and 1957. It was largely on the recommendation of Douglas Steere that the Service Committee opened its African program in Southern Rhodesia. The Central African Federation had just been organized and plans were being made to establish a multiracial university in Salisbury. Moving on the premise that work of a reconciling nature could be more creatively approached there than in other areas of Africa at this time, the Committee sent appointees to Salisbury in 1957.

The Steeres had last seen the multipurpose village development program in Barpali on their previous trip to India in 1954-55. Returning last December, they saw the changes

wrought by irrigation and the coming of electricity and railroads to the area—symbols of India's future for which the Quaker unit in the state of Orissa works to help the villagers prepare.

## Visits Provide a Link

THE intervisitation program under which the Steeres traveled was conceived in part to provide a communicating link among Quaker workers on four continents, and among groups of Quaker supporters often small and isolated from each other by great distances. The purpose of the serial assignment was stated at the time the cooperative plan was formed: "Douglas Steere's responsibility will be directed to the interpretation and encouragement of Friends' ideals and way of life in the foreign field, and to the searching out and becoming familiar with men, ideas, and experiments in religious, social, and intellectual fields abroad that might prove of significance to the AFSC."

Introducing the Steeres at a recent report they made to the AFSC staff, Colin Bell, head of the Committee, said, "They have left on three continents a corridor of good will and good faith."





Jerry Lehmann

This dome home, under construction in a Mexican village, may revolutionize house building.

#### New Publications

**MEXICO MOVING**—An illustrated folder describing AFSC programs in Mexico.

**REFUGEE RELIEF REPORTS**—A two-page flyer describing refugee aid on Hong Kong and another on the Committee's work with refugees in Austria.

**GIFTS FOR ALGERIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN, 1960**—A four-page illustrated flyer suggesting gifts for Algerian children such as a pillowcase of clothes, a do-it-yourself box of writing and drawing materials, chalk boards, blankets, and health kits.

**CHILDREN'S MATERIALS**—"Days of Discovery" and "Friendly Things to Do" are two packets with service projects through which children may give assistance to children elsewhere in the world. Songs, games, stories, riddles, dramatizations, and worship resources are useful for vacation schools and summer camps. 25 cents each.

**ALTERNATIVES TO THE ARMS RACE**—A reprint of a letter to the *Santa Barbara Newspress* written by W. H. Ferry, vice-president of the Fund for the Republic. 5 cents.

**DANGER HAS ALTERNATIVES**—A reprint of an article "Surprise Attack" written by J. David Singer and published originally in *The Nation*. 15 cents.

**CHINA—1959**—A pamphlet containing a series of articles on China written by Walter Gordon and published originally in *The Toronto Star*. 30 cents.

**OUR CHINA POLICY**—A pamphlet with an editorial and article from *The Progressive*. 20 cents.

## THE ADOBE DOME

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communities. When the community was anxious for a school building or other community project, volunteers were plentiful; but the ideal of volunteering for service in a neighboring village or a far-off place was foreign to them.

During the last ten years increasing numbers of Latin American students have volunteered for service units and

many projects have been manned and led largely by Mexican volunteers.

Social workers, educators, and public health officials have sent young people to participate in our units. Former participants are now in positions of influence in state and national governments in part at least as a result of service motivation.

Each year the annual meeting of the Mexican Friends Service Committee brings out between 140 and 200 young men and women.

## NEW GIFT PLAN IS AVAILABLE

The AFSC has a new way in which it can receive capital gifts and yet assure the donor lifetime income from funds given.

The plan was inaugurated when inquiries to the Committee indicated that some of its friends wanted to contribute to the organization immediately yet continue to have available for themselves the earnings from such funds.

Gifts of cash, securities, or other property can be made to the AFSC. These contributions will be consolidated in an AFSC investment fund and the donor will be paid the income the fund earns.

Earle Edwards, AFSC associate secretary for finance, said the new plan provides important tax advantages for many contributors.

"This plan," he said, "is a convenience for those to whom the management of investments might be a burden. It also avoids costs that would occur in settlement of an estate. These sometimes run as high as ten per cent."

• The AFSC depends upon gifts of interested individuals, groups, foundations, and corporations for the support of its work. If you would like to have information write to the Finance Office.

AFSC BULLETIN Number 68 Form 3547 Requested

The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization, attempts to relieve human suffering and find creative solutions to tensions between individuals, groups, or nations. We believe there is that love in God in every man, and that love in action can overcome hatred, prejudice, and fear. Our work is open to anyone regardless of race, religion, or nationality. We depend upon your contributions. Checks may be sent to the American Friends Service Committee at any of its offices.

American Friends Service Committee  
20 S. 12th St., Philadelphia 7, Pa.